

UNCLAS KATHMANDU 000137

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: POLITICAL PARTIES AGREE ON NEED FOR "JOINT STRUGGLE"; LITTLE ELSE

REF: A. (A) 02 KATHMANDU 1932

[1B.](#) (B) 02 KATHMANDU 1988

[1C.](#) (C) 02 KATHMANDU 2437

[11.](#) (U) On January 22 the leaders of four political parties, including the two largest--the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (UML)--announced they had decided to initiate a "joint struggle" to protest King Gyanendra's October 4 dismissal of the previous government and his subsequent appointment of an interim Cabinet (Refs A and B). Details of exactly what this "struggle" will entail, however, remain sparse.

[12.](#) (SBU) UML Central Committee Member Bharat Mohan Adhikari told us the four parties have formed a joint task force charged with drafting a policy paper suggesting peaceful programs and strategies to protect democracy, reactivate the Constitution, which the parties maintain was neutralized by the King's fiat, and "stop retrogression." (Besides the heavy-hitting Nepali Congress and the UML, the other two signatories are the left-wing Peasants and Workers Party and People's Front Nepal, which had a total of seven MPs in the previous Parliament. The National Democratic Party and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party, the parties of the current interim Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister respectively, were notably excluded from the deliberations and the final agreement.) Adhikari said the movement will later seek participation from the National Democratic Party and the Nepal Sadbhavana. Once their strategies and programs are developed, the four parties plan to approach King Gyanendra to request him to hand over executive power to an all-party government.

[13.](#) (SBU) NC Spokesman Arjun Narasingh K.C. echoed the UML's points about developing a joint strategy, adding that the task force will also agree on a common "bottom line" the parties will demand from the King. So far, however, that agreement continues to elude the parties, K.C. acknowledged, as the Nepali Congress' proposal that the former Parliament be reinstated is not supported by any of the other three parties, who are demanding an all-party government instead. The parties may have to compromise on their respective demands to reach such an agreement, K.C. suggested. He added that substantive work by the task force will have to be deferred until after the February 1 UML general convention.

[14.](#) (SBU) People's Front Nepal Party Secretary Himlal Puri emphasized that the joint movement, whatever its eventual outline, will be peaceful. Besides pressuring the King to rectify a move the parties regard as unconstitutional, the joint movement will also ask the Maoists to stop killing innocent people and destroying infrastructure.

[15.](#) (SBU) Comment: The parties can agree that they dislike the King's action in appointing and installing an interim non-party government; just what they can and should do about it obviously remains a point of considerable uncertainty, however. Nepali Congress Party President G.P. Koirala continues to insist on the reinstatement of Parliament, even though the Supreme Court has already ruled the May 22 dissolution was constitutional and even though no other party supports that position. Spokesman Arjun K.C.'s conciliatory comments notwithstanding, we have so far seen or heard little from the upper ranks of the Nepali Congress that would indicate a willingness to accommodate other views on this matter. Earlier indications that the UML might reach an understanding with the Palace (Ref C), meanwhile, appear to have been squelched for now by a virulent internal power struggle within the party that can become only more contentious as the date of the upcoming UML general convention nears. Political parties in Nepal do not enjoy a strong tradition of cooperation and collaboration--even within their own organizations. We expect it will be some time before the parties can reach more substantive mutual agreement on the elements of this much-hyped initiative.

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